

Rail Company Completes First Ever Sector-based Work Academy Programme in Sussex

November 26, 2020



Despite the onset of a second national lockdown, the UK's largest rail operator – Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) – launched its first ever Sector-based Work Academy Programme (SWAP) with East Sussex College this month. After training and preparing 12 local candidates for employment, the programme is now close to completion.

Designed in partnership with [Sussex Skills Solutions](#) (part of East Sussex College) and Jobcentre Plus, the SWAP aims to break down barriers that many people face when seeking employment. Targeted at those who are long-term unemployed or who aren't in training or education – the programme has given candidates the opportunity to develop essential employability skills whilst gaining qualifications. Interviews are now underway for two permanent, full-time roles at GTR's Southern stations.

This new partnership builds on the success of the operator's established '[Get into Railways](#)' programme with the Prince's Trust, which is now in its sixth year. So far, 94% of participants have successfully completed the programme. GTR's SWAP with Sussex Skills Solutions supports the Government's aim to help communities that would otherwise be left behind.

Angie Doll, Managing Director for Southern and Gatwick Express, said: “We’re committed to providing support in the communities we serve and feel it is more important than ever to help people in society that may be at risk of exclusion.

“With unemployment rates increasing, we’re proud to have worked with East Sussex College on a dedicated Sector-based Work Academy Programme aimed at upskilling unemployed individuals to get them ready for the world of work. This is just part of our wider strategy to enable social mobility.”

Stephen Burkes, Director of Sussex Skills Solutions, said: “We’re thrilled to be working with Govia Thameslink Railway on this exciting new Sector-based Work Academy Programme. We’re very pleased that we have been able to create a bespoke training programme that will offer people valuable skills in customer service and employability, as well as offer two full-time jobs with Southern. For those who are unsuccessful in gaining those roles, this course will enable them to become better equipped in their search for work.

“We’re also hugely thankful to the Department for Work and Pensions for their help and support in helping to get this Sector-based Work Academy Programme up and running, marketing the offer to their customer, and supporting us throughout the application process.”

Minister for Employment, Mims Davies MP, added: “It’s great to see local jobseekers benefit from our vital partnership with Govia Thameslink Railway and East Sussex College supporting them to boost their employability through the SWAPs scheme. All candidates will be leaving this placement with new skills and qualifications to pivot into expanding sectors and enter meaningful employment – and with a guaranteed interview on completion, I wish them every success.”

The four-week training programme launched on Monday 2nd November and enrolled candidates via the Jobcentre Plus teams in Hove, Worthing and Bognor Regis. All of the candidates were able to benefit from face-to-face teaching for the first three days. From Thursday 5th November, in line with the national lockdown, the course moved to blended virtual learning with online lectures and one-to-one support from assessors. To follow social distancing measures, the candidates were split into two smaller groups of six for physical lessons.

Photo credit: Peter Alvey/GTR

For today's rail news from railbusinessdaily.com click [here](#).